A DISCOVERY

OF

Six Women-Preachers, in *Middlesex*, *Kent*, *Cambridge*, and *Salisbury*.

WITH

A Relation of their Names, Manners, Life, and Doctrine.

Their Names.

{*Anne Hempstall.* {*Ioane Bauford.* {*Eliz. Bancroft.*
{*Mary Bilbrow.* {*Susan May.* {*Arabella Thomas.*

Printed, 1641.

The ſix Women-Preachers.

Anne Hempſtall, *Ioan Bauford*, *Elizabeth Bancroft* } and { *Mary Bilbrow*, *Suſan May*, *Arabella Thomas*.

IN ancient times have I read of Propheteſſes, but not untill of late heard of Women Preachers, their onely reaſon or cauſe of preaching, was, that there was a deficiency of good men, wherefore it was but fit, that vertuous women ſhould ſupply their places, they were (men they did meane) good for nothing, but to make their Texts good by expounding the language of the Beaſt, but they themſelves would preach nothing, but ſuch things as the ſpirit ſhould move them.

The firſt and chiefe of this female and Sacerdoticall function, was one *Anne Hempſtall*, living in the Pariſh of Saint *Andrewes* Holborne, neere London, and in the County of Middleſex, upon a certaine time, ſhe having a minde, ſaid ſhe was moved to bee zealouſly affected, called an aſſembly

of her bibbing Gossips together, whose thoughts were bent more upon the strong water bottle, then upon the uses or doctrines which their holy sister entended to expound unto them, but being come to the house of this *Anne Hempstall*, zealous *Nan* spake to them after this manner,

Beloved sisters, this last night I dreamed a strange Dream, moreover me thought I saw a vision, in which *Anna* the propheteſſe was presented unto my view, the splendour of whose countenance did cast me into a trance, wherein I lay untill the next morning, and the morning being come, I could conceive no interpretation of my Dream but this, that I should imitate godly *Anna*, by preaching unto you, as she prophesied to others; her speech strook them all into an astonishment, at which, this prophane *Anne* cryed out, Now doth the holy Ghost descend downe upon you, wherefore give eare unto mee, then did she begin to talke, and speake unto them that which first came into her minde, but the chiefe matter of her Text was this, That womans haire was an adorning to her, but for a man to have long haire, it was a shame unto him, which the Scripture it selfe cryeth fie upon; long did shee preach, and longer I dare avouch then some of the audience were willing, for some of them had as far home as White Chappell, wherefore her longitude might cause a brevitude of her sucking the *Aquavitæ* bottle; two houres being expired, and the bottome of the stool beginning to look open-mouthed with her furious stamps, shee gave them

them as much peace as in her lay, and so concluded.

Mary Bilbrow, one of the Audience, being of the Parish of Saint *Giles* in the fields, desired them to bee all with her the next morning, and after Sermon they should have good fat Pig to breakfast, besides a cup of Sack or Claret to wash it down: They all agreed unto it, and making use of all the Rhetorick which they were borne unto, they gave her thanks, and so for that time a Bottle of Ale, or two being devoured, they departed every one to their owne houses. The next morning they met all together at the house of *Mary Bilbrow*, whose husband was a good honest Bricklayer; and so soone as they came within the doors of her house, she brought them all into her Parlour, as shee called it, and in stead of stools and cushions, shee had provided before hand, three Brickes apiece for them to sit upon, her reason was this, shee thought they would not sit much, because women to good instructions love standing: her Pulpit was framed very substantially of Brick, so high that scarce any thing but her standing up tippet could be seen. She began there very devoutly to make an *ex tempore* prayer, but before shee had scarce spoken twenty words, her daughter came running in very hastily, telling her a Gentleman at *Bloomsbury* stayed to speake with her about urgent occasions; which hearing, shee leapt out of her prayer into this serious meditation, I think it be the Gentleman I was withall at

Salisbury Court, whom I promiſed this day to meet withall: whereupon ſhe left her pulpit, ſpred the cloath, and brought her Goſſips in a Pig, according to her promiſe; who fed heartily, and ſo departed. So much at this time for Middleſex female Teachers.

Now give mee leave to take water, and goe to Graveſend, and ſo further into Kent, where I ſhall tell you of one *Ioan Banford* in the Towne of Feverſham, who taught in Feverſham, that husbands being ſuch as croſſed their wives wills, might lawfully be forſaken.

Then was there one *Suſan May* of Aſhford in the County of Kent alſo, which preached in a Barne there, that the Divell was the father of the Pope, the Pope the father of thoſe which did weare Surplices; wherefore conſequently the Divell was the father of all thoſe which did not love Puritans.

There was likewiſe one *Elizabeth Bancroft* in Ely in Cambridgeſhire, where Biſhop *Wren* firſt going to place Altars there, preached behinde the Miniſter upon a ſaturday, that it was fit upon Sunday to ſacrifice the Popes Bird upon his owne Altar.

Then laſtly, there was one *Arabella Thomas*, a Welch woman, which lived in the Citie of Saliſbury, which preached, and in her Sermon ſaid, that none but ſuch painfull creatures as her ſelfe ſhould goe to heaven: for thoſe Miniſters which did not preach twice upon every Sabbath day, ſhe ſaid,

ſaid, that very ſhortly the blacke Raven by day, and the white Owle by night ſhould ſcratch out their eyes.

Thus have I declared ſome of the female Academies, but where their Univerſitie is, I cannot tell, but I ſuppoſe that Bedlam or Bridewell would be two convenient places for them. Is it not ſufficient that they may have the Goſpel truly and ſincerely preached unto them, but they muſt take their Miniſters office from them? If there had been ſuch a dearth of the Goſpel as there was in the reigne of Q. *Mary*, it had been an occaſion ſomewhat urgent. But God bee praiſed it was not ſo, but that they ſeemed to bee ambitious, and becauſe they would have ſuperiority, they would get upon a ſtoole, or in a tub in ſtead of a pulpit. At this time I have deſcribed but ſix of them, ere long I fear I ſhall relate more, I pray God I have no cauſe; and ſo for this time I conclude.

FINIS.

241794